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ABSTRACT

The term andragogy, often defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn," has gained wide recognition during the last decade or so. Although used in the early 19th century, the term was popularized in this country by Malcolm Knowles in his book, "The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy" (1970). The book was aimed at "exploring a comprehensive theory that will give coherence, consistency and technological direction to adult education practice." Knowles' assumptions about adult and child learning were almost uncritically accepted and integrated into adult education practice. Continuing education for social workers was no exception, especially with the influence of Lindeman at the Columbia University School of Social Work. In more recent years, however, some educators have begun to question this "split" between pedagogy and andragogy, preferring to view learning as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. That the use of the term is debatable should serve as a caution to those continuing educators who blithely and routinely call for andragogical approaches to education and training. Andragogy may indeed have a role in continuing social work education, but its use appears limited to specific subjects, populations, and settings. It is no educational panacea, and its uncritical use is not in the best interests of educators, trainers, or learners. (This paper cites numerous references for and against the use of the term or theory of andragogy and summarizes various schools of thought on its use.) (KC)

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ANDRAGOGY: ANOTHER BANDWAGON OR LEGITIMATE TOOL IN THE CONTINUING EDUCATION ARMAMENTARIUM?

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Andragogy: Another Bandwagon or Legitimate Tool
In the Continuing Education Armamentarium?

The term andragogy, often defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn,"[1] has gained wide recognition in this country during the last ten to fifteen years. Continuing educators in a plethora of disciplines have advocated its use in education, training, and staff development. Prominent social work continuing educators, such as Ronald Green at Tennessee and Richard L. Edwards at SUNY - Albany, have gone on record favoring andragogical training approaches for adults.[2] The recommendations have appeared in the **Journal of Continuing Social Work Education**, the **Journal of Education for Social Work**, and in papers presented at the annual conferences of the National Association of Continuing Education Directors and the Council on Social Work Education.

However, these papers and publications tend to ignore or minimize the debate over andragogy within professional adult education circles. Such renowned adult educators as Cyril Houle, Jack London, and others have serious reservations concerning the theoretical status and practical utility of andragogy. The past several years have witnessed approximately twenty articles in adult education journals which argue the pros and cons of this approach. Another twenty or so dissertations have operationalized this concept and accumulated an impressive quantity of data.

Continuing educators who are unaware of this debate and the current research findings may well be too uncritical in their acceptance and

utilization of andragogy. A second and closer look certainly seems to be warranted for educators and trainers interested in most effectively meeting the needs of adult human service personnel. The purpose of this article is to take that second look and examine andragogy in terms of its rapidly developing research and literature. Specifically, this article will provide a brief history of andragogy, including its major assumptions; it will detail the influence of andragogy on social work; it will discuss the debate over andragogy within adult education circles; and it will reassess the value of andragogy for continuing educators.

History and Assumptions of Andragogy

Andragogy is so identified with Malcolm Knowles that some people actually attribute the word to him. However, the term was initially coined in 1833 in Germany by Alexander Kapp to describe the educational theory of Plato.[3] A fellow German, John Frederick Herbart strongly objected to the use of the word for such a purpose, and andragogy disappeared for nearly a century. It reappeared in 1921 and was being used extensively by the 1960s in France, Yugoslavia, and Holland.

While Knowles is generally given credit for introducing andragogy to the United States in 1968, Anderson and Lindeman actually deserve that particular honor. Their book **Education Through Experience**[4] contained the first reference to andragogy in this country. They failed to develop the concept, however, and andragogy disappeared for another forty years in the United States.

Knowles was exposed to the word in Europe in the mid-sixties and reintroduced it to the United States in 1968. He expounded upon his ideas in **The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy**, a volume aimed at "exploring a comprehensive theory that will give coherence, consistency, and technological direction to adult education practice."[5]

Knowles' theory was based upon four assumptions which distinguished adult learning from child learning, to wit: (1) as a person matures the self-concept moves from dependency toward self-direction; (2) maturity brings an accumulating reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning; (3) as the person matures readiness to learn is increasingly oriented toward the person's social roles; and (4) as the person matures the orientation towards learning becomes less subject-centered and increasingly problem-centered.[6]

These assumptions, which are distilled from adult education, progressive education, developmental psychology and humanistic psychology, lead to important differences between the educational designs for children and adults. A person adhering to a pedagogical philosophy would advocate an instructional climate that was authority-oriented, formal, and competitive. The instructor would be responsible for planning, diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, and evaluation. Design of the instructional process would depend upon the logic of the subject matter and content units. Information would be transmitted from the instructor to the students in traditional formats (e.g., lectures).

By contrast, an instructor subscribing to an andragogical philosophy would establish an instructional climate that was mutually respectful, informal, and collaborative. Planning, diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, and evaluation would be a mutual process between instructor and student. Design of the instructional process would be affected by student readiness to learn and problem units. Learning would occur from experiential techniques actively involving the learner. In short, the andragogue could more properly be viewed as a facilitator of learning rather than as a disseminator of information.

Andragogy and Social Work

Considering the humanistic orientation of andragogy and its emphasis on Allport, Maslow, and Rogers, it is not surprising that social workers were attracted to it. Additionally, andragogy's reliance on such developmental psychologists as Havighurst and Neugarten also appealed to social workers who relied on these and similar theorists. Finally, andragogy was heavily influenced by Lindeman who infused adult education with the spirit of progressive education. Lindeman enjoyed a distinguished career at the Columbia University School of Social Work and his contributions still influence contemporary social work.

Andragogy's influence on social work was considerably enhanced by Knowles' invitational address at the 1971 Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education and by the paper's subsequent publication in the **Journal of Education for Social Work.**[1] Andragogy soon found its way into classroom education, field education, and continuing education.

Brown, Katz, and Walden[8] used andragogical principles to teach a direct practice methods course. They reported success but stated that not all students could benefit from the looser structure and that this mode of instruction required considerable faculty time. Antler[9] used andragogy to educate graduate social work students in basic policy analysis skills. He assumed that students were adult learners, self-motivated, and self-directed. Brigham[10] linked andragogy with Freire's liberation theory and called for professional education to produce learners who are creative subjects rather than receiving objects.

Prochaska and Fallon[11] found the andragogical process of program development useful in preparing a community for a Family Life Education program. Bogo[12] applied the andragogical model to a faculty/field liaison program for first time field instructors and reported that linkages between field and faculty could be strengthened, a mutual aid group developed, and student performance expectations unified.

As might be expected, andragogy had even more appeal to those social workers involved in training more experienced social service personnel. Gelfand, Rohrich, Nevidon, and Starak[13] used the approach to train Children's Aid Society workers. Davis[14] used the principles to develop a specialized training program for state surveyors and service providers in intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded.

Child welfare personnel seemed especially suited for the application of andragogical principles. Rycus[15], Rosick[16], and Hunzeker[17] all reported success in training child welfare workers and foster parents. Gillian[18]

built upon such work in completing a dissertation entitled **Andragogy: A Conceptual Model for Social Work Continuing Education.**

Additionally, it has become commonplace for continuing educators and staff developers to call for andragogical approaches to educating and training social service students and workers. Dissenting voices are a rarity. However, it is curious that so much attention has been lavished upon a controversial approach which has been sorely lacking in systematic evaluation. Of equal curiosity is why Knowles receives such favorable attention from social workers while his adult education detractors, including such imminents as Houle and London, tend to be ignored. Social workers might secure a firmer base for their educational and training efforts if they examined both sides of the andragogy debate.

The Andragogy Debate

Cyril Houle[19] voiced the first major criticism of andragogy in **The Design of Education.** Houle, who taught Knowles during his graduate years, rejected andragogy as an organizing principle in adult education. He preferred to view education as a single fundamental human process and believed that while there were differences between children and adults, the learning activities of men and women were essentially the same as those of boys and girls. Houle conceptualized andragogy as a technique or set of techniques.

Jack London[20] wrote a lengthy review of Knowles' **The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy** and basically agreed with Houle. He emphasized the oneness or unity of education, as opposed to a dichotomous perspective and indicated that some andragogical principles could be applied

to children. He also argued that another "invented or imported" phase would not contribute clarity to a field already overburdened with jargon. Furthermore, he suggested that adult educators were empasizing andragogy in an effort to achieve status and respect within educational circles.

Following the initial reservations voiced by Houle and London, the late 1970s witnessed a flurry of articles in **Adult Education** and **Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years** which intensified and refined the debate. Leon McKenzie reignited the controversy by asking:

> Is the word 'andragogy' simply a trendy neologism devoid of significance or is the term pregnant with a possible new theory of practice for adult education? Does the distinction between pedagogy and andragogy represent a mere word game, a fruitless semantic joust, a futile exercise in the fabrication of jargon? or does the distinction between pedagogy and andragogy provide a point of departure for clarifying and amplifying the complex concept of 'adult education?' [21]

McKenzie found value in the term and suggested that extant disagreement stemmed from different philosophical orientations. In other words, the debate existed because adult educators had different philosophical bases. McKenzie maintained that those who adhered to a unified outlook on education argued from an understanding of human nature derived from classical metaphysics. He reduced their approach to a syllogism:

Major:	Adults and children are essentially the same since they share the same human nature.
Minor:	For those who are essentially the same, education is essentially the same.

Conclusion: For adults and children education is essentially the same.

Corrollary: Andragogy is an illusion which represents more jargon in the lexicon of educationese.[22]

Adult educators subscribing to a differential perspective would be classified under the heading of phenomenology. This approach can also be placed in syllogistic form:

Major: Adults and children are existentially different.

Minor: For those who are existentially different, education is existentially different.

Conclusion: For adults and children education is existentially different.

Corollary: The concept of andragogy reflects a significant contribution to philosophical discourse about adult education.[23]

According to McKenzie, it is this difference in philosophical origination points that explains why intelligent and reflective adult educators can be found on both sides of this issue. They begin from conflicting philosophical premises and utilize different techniques of inquiry.

Elias[24] joined forces with Houle and London and reasserted the importance of unity in education. He did not think that the differences in adults and children warranted a different educational approach. In fact, he implied that andragogy was essentially the same as progressive education and that progressive education was applicable to both adults and children. Elias believed that the general concept of education was sufficient for each group, hence, neither andragogy nor pedagogy was required.

He disagreed with McKenzie's observation that the differences among adult educators were merely philosophical in nature. Furthermore, Elias made the strong charge that the andragogical-pedagogical debate was "not a matter of educational theory but a misguided attempt to enhance the status for the field of adult education."[25]

Responding to Elias' critique, McKenzie again relied on philosophy. Assuming an existentialist stance, he explained that adults and children were basically different because of different modes of being-in-the-world, that they exhibited different modes of existing, that these modes were identifiable through phenomenological analysis, and that "the existential differences between children and adults require a strategic differentiation of education practice."[26]

McKenzie also took issue with the charge that andragogy was a "superfluous symbol" for progressive education. Acknowledging the lineal connections from Dewey to Lindeman to Knowles, he delineated several distinctions between andragogy and progressive education. McKenzie maintained that: (1) progressive education was grounded in pragmatism while andragogy was grounded in existentialism; (2) progressivism emphasized public school education while andragogy emphasized nontraditional setting; (3) progressivism emphasized childhood education while andragogy emphasized adult education; and (4) progressivism represented a complete philosophical system while andragogy represented simply a paradigm.

Despite his rebuttal of Elias' ideas, McKenzie welcomed the debate and dialogue.

When faced with childhood and adulthood, the conjunctive thinker will see continuities and object to the idea of andragogy. The disjunctive thinker will spy discontinuities and applaud the idea. Both types of thinkers are needed in the field of adult education, if for no other reason than to ward off intellectual stagnation.[27]

Knowles, the chief proponent of andragogy, entered the fray to clarify the evolution of his thoughts on this subject. He admitted that he had made a mistake in subtitling his **The Modern Practice of Adult Education** "Andragogy Versus Pedagogy." Such labeling established a controversial dichotomous view of andragogy-pedagogy despite the fact that Knowles' writing had always stressed the value of andragogical approaches even for children under certain circumstances. His revised book emphasized the continuum perspective and was appropriately subtitled "From Pedagogy to Andragogy." Additionally, Knowles indicated that adults learned better from pedagogical assumptions and approaches under certain circumstances.

Viewing andragogy more as a technique rather than a fully developed theory of adult education or adult learning, he concluded:

So I am not saying that pedagogy is for children and andragogy is for adults, since some pedagogical assumptions are realistic for adults in some situations and some andragogical assumptions are realistic for children in some situations. And I am certainly not saying that pedagogy is bad and andragogy is good; each is appropriate given the relevant assumptions. [28]

The thrust of Knowles' reasoning, however, still seemed to view pedagogy as most appropriate for children and andragogy as most appropriate for adults.

Even though Knowles eventually conceptualized andragogy more as a technique than a theory, Carlson[29] offered additional arguments that it be viewed as a theory. He responded primarily to Elias who maintained that learning theory -- the main theoretical base of andragogy -- did not justify distinct differences in teaching. Carlson intimated that Elias may have missed the point by stressing teaching over adult learning.

He also questioned Elias' statements that all teaching involves "explaining, concluding, inferring, giving reasons, demonstrating, defining, comparing, motivating, counseling, evaluation, planning, encouraging, disciplining, and questioning." Carlson failed to see how this schema accounted for Freire's commitment to dialogue or Knowles' heavy emphasis on self-directed learning.

Acknowledging that learning theory alone might not completely suppport the concept of andragogy, Carlson advocated a political dimension. He pointed out that even Elias has stressed the importance of socialization of children. He then questioned whether a democratic society should have the right to socialize or resocialize adults. Carlson maintained that it did not have that right and that persons reaching adulthood, which is the point when society confers the legal and social rights and responsibilities of adulthood, should learn from andragogical approaches.

Finally, Carlson instilled a philosophical ingredient. Adult educators must possess a view of humankind consonant with the emphasis of andragogy.

Human beings are essentially good and capable of self-directed learning. A democratic philosophy honors the individual and his or her humanity. Subject matter is not "everything" to education but simply the vehicle for human development. Carlson urged that:

> . . . we infuse a deeper, more substantial meaning into andragogy -- a philosophical and political meaning that supplements and enriches the learning theory that currently seems to support the concept. With the political and philosophical dimensions suggested here, it seems to me that we are on the way to a more profound theoretical base that may well warrant the retention and further progression of the andragogy-pedagogy dichotomy. I hope that adult educators will engage in a continuing dialogue on this issue, a dialogue that might lead to important new insights regarding the theory underlying our practice.[30]

The dialogue certainly continued throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. Lebel[31] stated that older adults were sufficiently different from younger adults to warrant their own theory -- geragogy. Yeo[32] preferred eldergogy as a specialized approach to education for elders. Knudson eschewed the dichotomy or continuum of andragogy-pedagogy and substituted humanagogy:

> . . . a theory of learning that takes into account the differences between people of various ages as well as their similarities. It is a human theory of learning, not a theory of 'child learning,' 'adult learning,' or 'elderly learning.' It is a theory of learning that

combines pedagogy, andragogy, and geragogy and takes into account every aspect of presently accepted psychological theory.[33]

Courtenay and Stevenson[34] approved of the wholistic emphasis of humanagogy but still questioned whether it could be classified as a theory. They definitely oppposed another "gogy" referring to older adults and warned that labeling groups could get out of hand. Apparently responding to McKenzie's argument that adults were existentially different from children, they asked if existential differences applied to other groups (e.g., racial, sexual, ethnic). For example, if Caucasians differed existentially from Negroes, would that justify Caucasiogogy versus Negrogogy? Would sex educators be classified under heterogogy, homogogy, or biagogy?

Seeing similar dangers Rachal [35] perceived even humanagogy as obfuscatory and feared that it could lead to an educational taxonomy of infantagogy, pedagogy, adolescagogy, andragogy, and geragogy. He cautioned against redefining pedagogy as only concerning children when many people interpreted the word as encompassing all of education. For example, how would the andragogy-pedagogy classification be reconciled with the adult educator Paulo Freire's **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**?

Rachal noted the possible confusion inherent in Knowles' remarks that under some circumstances andragogy was appropriate for children and pedagogy for adults. He believed that the terms self-directed and teacher-directed could be substituted for andragogy and pedagogy. The latter terms would be more self-explanatory and would not be limited to any particular clientele. Acknowledging that the debate would not soon go away, he hoped that it would

become more muted. However, he anticipated that even the substitution of self-directed and teacher-directed would not resolve the substantive philosophical debate between the two approaches to adult learning. He felt, though, that the debate

> . . . is mitigated by the recognition that the two approaches are not dichotomous, but rather are on a continuum. Both have an appropriate place in adult education; indeed even in a single class some synthesis is possible, even desirable. The adult educator's challenge is to effect that synthesis to the best advantage for his or her students while at the same time maintaining the educational standard and quality for which he/she is ultimately accountable.[36]

Implications for Continuing Education

The preceding chronology of the andragogy debate should serve as a caution to those continuing educators who blithely and routinely call for andragogical approaches to education and training. Personnel responsible for planning, developing, administering, and evaluating continuing education programs should be more aware of the intense disagreement among prominent adult educators. The nature of the debate suggests that resolution may not be forthcoming in the immediate future.

In fact, if the controversy does stem from different philosophical perspectives of the world, the debate may never be resolved. The same phenomena may be perceived in different ways by different people. Adult educators adhering to an integrated world-view will stress unity in education

and reject andragogy. Those adhering to a differential world-view will accept andragogy and reject an all-inclusive orientation to education.

However, most continuing educators realize that programming and selection of teaching-learning strategies must proceed even in the absence of philosophical consensus. Educational research may offer a path out of this dilemma. Opponents and proponents of andragogy tend to argue their positions from personal and impressionistic perspectives while virtually ignoring the growing body of literature. For example, the Nottingham Andragogy Group[37] published a 48-page monograph on andragogy which did not refer to any of the recently published research articles on this topic. This may have been understandable earlier when many of the initial articles were descriptive accounts of andragogical assumptions being applied in a variety of settings. These articles attested to the growing popularity of andragogy, but they contributed little in the way of scientific data. Such data is now becoming available and should be utilized by continuing educators.

Hadley[38] took the assumptions underlying andragogy and operationalized them into a construct measurable by an educational orientiation scale. This instrument and others similar to it have been used to accumulate a developing data base. Katz,[39] Kerwin,[40] Holmes,[41] Hopkins,[42] and Jones,[43] have studied andragogical-pedagogical orientations of adult educators in a variety of settings. Christian,[44] Davenport,[45] Grubbs,[46] and Van Allen,[47] have done additional work on the orientation of adult learners. It is this research-supported data base that ultimately will determine andragogy's claim to

theoretical status and its value to educators and trainers of adult human service workers.

The preliminary findings indicate that andragogical-pedagogical orientations can be defined, measured, and evaluated. Early indications are that educational orientation may vary according to age, sex, and other variables. However, effects size tends to be low, and the results are not always in the expected direction. For example, several studies have reported no significant differences in andragogical-pedagogical orientations between younger and older learners, and several studies have actually found younger learners more andragogically-oriented than older learners. These fundings would seemingly deserve considerable attention from continuing educators.

Sex appears to be a more consistent predictor of educational orientation. Research on faculty, students, and practitioners show that females tend to be more andragogically-oriented than their male counterparts. However, while the differences are significant, they are not dramatic. Most groupings, whether on the basis of age or sex, fall into the middle range of the andragogical-pedagogical continuum. This would suggest that instructional and training approaches featuring a blend of andragogical and pedagogical techniques might be the preferred mode for effectively reaching most adults.

Continuing educators should note, however, that current research results are tentative and preliminary - not conclusive and definitive. Andragogy is developing a data base, but it has yet to demonstrate the explanatory and predictive powers of a fully-developed theory.

Andragogy may indeed have a role in continuing social work education, but its use appears limited to specific subjects, populations, and settings. For example, the research showing that younger students and women are more oriented to andragogy than are older students and men would indicate that continuing education based solely on this one approach would not best meet the needs of all learners. In short, andragogy may have its place in the armamentarium of continuing educators, but this approach must be carefully and deliberately chosen for selected situations. It is no educational panacea, and its uncritical use is not in the best interests of educators, trainers, or learners.

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